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(Drafting Office and Officer)

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: March 2, 1959

SUBJECT: Proposed Visit of Senior Departmental Officer to Bonn

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Wilhelm G. Grewe, German Ambassador  
Mr. Livingston T. Merchant - EUR  
Mr. Martin J. Hillenbrand - GER

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At his urgent request Ambassador Grewe called on Mr. Merchant. After learning that the Department had already received word of Ambassador Bruce's conversation with van Scharpenberg, Dr. Grewe reiterated the desirability of a high-ranking Departmental officer visiting Bonn this week. He stressed that such an exchange of views would be helpful to the German Delegation to the Working Group meeting in Paris on March 9. He said that, while the Foreign Office was not particularly troubled by proposals it might wish to make in the reunification field, it felt it was in delicate position to make any proposals regarding European security without prior consultation with the United States, whose interests are primarily involved.

Mr. Merchant referred to a discussion he had had yesterday with Mr. Murphy and the Acting Secretary, the conclusion of which was that it would be physically impossible for either Mr. Murphy or Mr. Merchant to visit Bonn this week. Mr. Merchant also mentioned the possibility of undesirable speculation should a senior American officer make a flying visit to Bonn. He indicated the present plan was to have Ambassador Bruce go to Paris for the second week of the Working Group meeting, then return to Bonn and discuss the situation informally with the Chancellor. Thereafter Ambassador Bruce would come to Washington for a brief period of consultation which would enable him to return to Bonn for further discussion with the Chancellor, bearing last-minute U.S. Government views on the developing situation.

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After a telephone call from his Embassy, which had just received a further communication from Bonn, Ambassador Grewe said he personally had expected a negative response. His Foreign Office now proposed that, if the visit of either Mr. Merchant or Mr. Murphy was impossible next week, perhaps either could come to Bonn during the week beginning March 16. The Ambassador said he felt a conversation with the Chancellor would be helpful. Mr. Merchant noted that the same negative considerations would apply to a visit at a later time as to the original proposal. He believed the necessary exchange of information and views could be handled between Ambassador Bruce, Ambassador Grewe and Chancellor Adenauer (Grewe himself had been ordered to report to Bonn on March 10 presumably in preparation for the Macmillan-Adenauer discussions on March 12 and 13). Mr. Merchant and Ambassador Grewe agreed to have a further discussion prior to the latter's departure for Bonn.

The Ambassador also mentioned that his Foreign Office was much concerned about recent Soviet threats to sign a separate peace treaty with the GDR. He felt that the Western Powers must be prepared to deal with the situation should they be presented with a fait accompli possibly during the Foreign Ministers or Summit meeting. He said he hoped the Department would give thought to the problem.

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